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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 05/22/07

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, May 21

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
May 22, 2007

09:22:

Met at Kantei with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Suzuki.

10:40:

Sent the Emperor and Empress off to Europe at Haneda Airport.

12:01:

Attended Upper House plenary session.

14:01:

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Met Shinji Tanimura, who wrote the lyrics and music for a song for anti-drug abuse campaign, at Kantei. Recorded video message for the national anti-drug abuse convention, attended by Special Advisor Seko.

14:45:

Met with Deputy Foreign Minister Kono.

15:37:

Attended together with his wife Akie exchange gathering with foreign students.

16:00:

Met at Kantei with Agriculture Ministry Rural Development Bureau Director General Nakajo, followed by Foreign Ministry Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Department Director General Atsumi and Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Ando.

16:45:

Met Hirata Bokujyo Co. President Nitta in the Diet building, joined by LDP Secretary General Nakagawa and LDP Yamagata Chapter Chairman Endo.

17:02:

Attended LDP board meeting.

17:35:

Met at Kantei with Kyodo News President Ishikawa and Chief Editor Goto. Attended afterwards award ceremony for recognition of structural reform special zone and regional revitalization plan.

18:26:

Met with assistant deputy chief cabinet secretaries Saka and Ando.

19:18:

Met at his official residence with Tokyo University Prof. Motoshige Ito, chairman of the Asia Gateway Strategy Council, attended by Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki and Special Advisor Nemoto.

4) Poll: Cabinet support at 49.6 percent, up for 1st time

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Abridged)
May 22, 2007

The rate of public support for Prime Minister Abe and his cabinet reached 49.6 percent in a face-to-face nationwide public opinion survey conducted by the Yomiuri Shimbun on May 19-20, showing an increase of 5.8 percentage points over the last survey taken in March. The support rate for the Abe cabinet went on dropping after its inauguration. In the last survey, the nonsupport rate slightly topped the support rate. This time, however, the support rate went up for the first time. The nonsupport rate for the Abe cabinet was 36.8 percent, down 7.1 points from the last survey.

In the Diet, a National Referendum Law stipulating procedures for constitutional revision has now been enacted. In addition, education reform bills have also cleared the Diet. These facts seem to have led to the support rate's rebound.

Among those who support the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the support rate for the Abe cabinet was 83 percent, up 5 points from

the last survey. Also, among those supporting the New Komeito, the LDP's coalition partner, the support rate rebounded to nearly 70 percent.

5) Poll: Cabinet support rate levels off

ASAHI (Page 1) (Abridged)
May 22, 2007

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Ahead of this summer's election for the House of Councillors, the Asahi Shimbun conducted a second survey of public opinion on May 19-20, in which the Abe cabinet scored a 44 percent support rate and a 36 percent nonsupport rate. The support rate topped the nonsupport rate as in the first survey taken a week ago (support at 43 percent, nonsupport at 33 percent).

Asked about Prime Minister Abe's job performance, 3 percent answered that it was beyond expectations, with 30 percent saying it was up to expectations and 27 percent saying it was short of expectations. Those having no expectations from the start accounted for 35 percent.

The same question was asked in this February's survey, which posted the lowest support rate for the Abe cabinet at 37 percent. In that survey, 1 percent answered that it was beyond expectations, with 25 percent saying it was up to expectations and 37 percent saying it was short of expectations. Those with no expectations from the first accounted for 32 percent. This time, there was a decrease in the proportion of those thinking it was short of their expectations, and there was an increase in the proportion of those thinking it was up to their expectations. In the survey this time, the public rating for the Abe cabinet's job performance changed for the better. This seems to have led to the rise in the support rate.

Asked for specific policy measures, 47 percent appreciated the prime minister's efforts for education reform, and 41 percent did not. As seen from these figures, affirmative answers somewhat outnumbered negative answers. However, public opinion was split over the premier's foreign policy and his efforts for constitutional revision. When respondents were asked if they supported the premier's foreign policy, "yes" accounted for 43 percent, with "no" at 42 percent. Asked about the premier's efforts for constitutional reform, "yes" accounted for 42 percent, with "no" at 43 percent.

Respondents were also asked which political party they would vote for if an election were to be held now for the House of Councillors. In response to this question, 31 percent picked the ruling Liberal Democratic Party for proportional representation (28 percent in the first survey), with 21 percent choosing the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) (21 percent in the first survey). Respondents were further asked which side between the ruling camp and the opposition camp they would like to see hold a majority as a result of this summer's House of Councillors election. In response, 36 percent chose the ruling camp (32 percent in the first survey), with 43 percent preferring the opposition camp (44 percent in the first survey).

6) Ruling coalition confident they will win Upper House election with cabinet approval rating on increase

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
May 22, 2007

According to a May survey by the Yomiuri Shimbun, the public's support rate for the Abe cabinet has turned upward. The government and ruling parties are greatly looking forward to the continuation of this trend with an eye on the House of Councillors election, which will take place in two months. A person close to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, pointing to a sense of self-confidence about a possible further increases in the cabinet approval rating, made this comment:

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"The fact that the prime minister took a bearish stance in dealing with such crucial issues as constitutional reform and reform of the civil service system led to an increase in the public support rating for the cabinet."

Asked by reporters about the result of the Yomiuri poll, Prime Minister Abe responded: "I don't react nervously to the results of public opinion polls, but I will continue making efforts to get public understanding for my policy measures in a honest manner."

Citing the civil service reform and improvement in relations with China as the factors for a pickup in the public approval rating for the Abe cabinet, Abe's aide stated: "All the more because both issues were unable to be dealt with by the Koizumi cabinet, many people highly valued the achievements by Prime Minister Abe."

Ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa categorically stated in a press conference yesterday:

"That might be the result of a one-on-one debate (on May 16 between the prime minister and Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President Ichiro Ozawa). We should provide the public with materials to determine by holding a party-heads debate every week."

Minshuto Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, however, revealed that his party would step up its stance of opposing the ruling coalition, saying: "The public might misunderstand and think that the prime minister has leadership. If they are deceived by his words, it will have a boomerang effect on them."

7) Prime minister's strategy to make constitutional revision top campaign issue coming under fire even from ruling party members

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
May 22, 2007

Prime Minister Abe aims to place the issue of revision of the Constitution in the campaign spotlight for the House of Councillors election. In reaction, officials in the ruling camp have begun to voice criticism. In the Kantei's recent email magazine, the prime minister noted, "I do not understand the criticism," but he is out of sync with those critical of the prime minister's stance. The opposition side has also pointed to the lack of unity in the ruling coalition.

In the email magazine on May 17, the prime minister said: "An election is an important opportunity for us to explain our views to the people and to conduct debate. I think it is insincere to sidestep an argument on the Constitution, which is linked to a national vision."

On a TV program on May 20, however, Hajime Funada of the Liberal Democratic Party, former chairman of the Constitution Council, commented: "To amend the Constitution, it is required to obtain support from more than two-thirds of all the Diet members. The prime minister's view will be invalid unless the ruling parties garner more than two-thirds of all the seats in the upcoming Upper House election." Yukio Edano of the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), chairman of the Constitution Research Commission, also quipped: "If the ruling coalition fails to secure two-thirds votes, will Prime Minister Abe step down?"

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Funada and Edano both keep in mind the outcome of the House of Representatives election in 1955. Then Prime Minister Hatoyama declared the goal of "winning two-thirds," but he failed to achieve it. The cabinet resigned en masse the following year.

New Komeito Policy Research Council Chairman Tetsuo Saito emphasized on another program the same day: "I could understand if (the prime minister) proposed making specifics in constitutional revision a point of contention, but he has expressed his willingness to take up the issue of revision of the Constitution itself as a campaign

issue. This is hard to understand."

8) First Lady Akie moved to tears while listening when President Bush speak of soldiers who died in war

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
May 22, 2007

During a dinner party hosted by the president and his wife when they visited the US last month, First Lady Akie, wife of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, was moved to tears when President Bush spoke of soldiers who died, and the president, looking at her tears, was also teary-eyed, according to an informed source. Such communication of the heart solicited words of admiration of Akie from Bush during a joint press conference held after the party, Bush said: "I have the impression that Akie is considerate and intelligent."

Abe and his wife attended the banquet at the White House on the night of April 26. Akie sat next to President Bush.

Akie: "What was the most heartbreaking experience to you since you assumed the presidency?"

Bush: "It is a hard time when I meet the families of soldiers who died (in Iraq and other wars). But I would like to meet as many families as possible. A leader sometimes needs to make a hard decision."

Hearing this, Akie unexpectedly had tears in her eyes. In response, the president, with tears in his eyes, held her hand and said: "You're a kind person."

9) Japan, US to include Australia in research on MD; Working-level talks to start this year

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Full)
May 22, 2007

The governments of Japan and the United States have decided to include Australia in their joint studies on a missile defense (MD) system designed to intercept incoming ballistic missiles from third countries. They will assume possible missile launches from North Korea and other countries. The three countries plan to set up a working-level council composed of their division directors by the end of the year to discuss ways to exchange intelligence and to cope with situations.

The joint-study concept was basically agreed on when the foreign and defense ministerial of the three countries met for the first time in Tokyo this April. According to a senior Defense Ministry official, "Japan, the US, and Australia will jointly discuss the Japanese and

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US plan to introduce the MD system, and the coping capacity and operation of the system, with the aim of strengthening the security system in the Asia-Pacific region."

Australia has yet to decide to introduce the MD system, but it is expected to mull the possibility of installing the system in the future while groping for operational cooperation with Japan and the US, such as the sharing of its intelligence on missile firing.

The three countries will conduct studies on the assumption of such scenes as a North Korean new-type intermediate-range missile or a Chinese ballistic missile coming to Guam Island or Australia.

When Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met visiting Australian Prime Minister Howard this March, they pledged in a joint statement on security to strengthen trilateral cooperation among Japan, the US, and Australia. Japan and the US agreed in the Security Consultative Committee meeting (2 + 2) held earlier by their foreign and defense ministers to improve the capacity of the MD system.

10) Missile defense data also leaked in Aegis incident; US Navy protests to MSDF

TOKYO (Page 1) (Abridged)
May 22, 2007

Aegis vessel data falling under the highest-level category of "defense secret" (tokubetsu boei himitsu) was recently found to have leaked and proliferated within the Maritime Self-Defense Force. In this incident, data on the Standard Missile 3 (SM-3), a sea-based intercept missile developed by the United States for ballistic missile defense, and other latest key data had also leaked, the Kanagawa prefectural police and the MSDF shore police discovered yesterday.

The US Navy, strongly shocked at the MSDF's careless control of information, delivered a stern protest to the MSDF. In the series of data leaks, the Kanagawa police and MSDF authorities deem that data files created by the MSDF's Program Service Unit (Development Group at present) in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, were brought out and spread among those trained at the MSDF's 1st Service School in Etajima, Hiroshima Prefecture. The police will thoroughly investigate the case for indictment.

The MSDF will mount the SM-3 on its Aegis-equipped destroyers, starting within the year. From now on, however, police investigations could greatly affect the MSDF in building a missile defense network.

According to the police, those data files that were found to have leaked this time include data on the SM-3's performance as well as data on an advanced communication system called "Link 16," which is also employed by the US Navy for its mainstay vessels and by the US Air Force for its military aircraft. Those data were provided by the United States. Link 16 is used to share information between Japanese and US forces. This system is indispensable for missile defense that needs to exchange information without delay from early warning satellites, according to sources. Information about the SM-3 and Link 16 is also categorized as "defense secret" stipulated in the Confidentiality Protection Law, which is incidental to an

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intergovernmental agreement between Japan and the United States on mutual defense assistance cooperation. The Kanagawa police are

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investigating the case on the charge of violating the law.

11) MOD to interview all SDF personnel to prevent info leaks

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
May 22, 2007

Ryuko Tadokoro

The Ministry of Defense (MOD) yesterday decided to interview every MOD official and every Self-Defense Forces (SDF) member totaling 250,000 more than once a year and on a regular basis regarding information management. This decision reflects MOD's strong concern about a series of information leaks involving SDF members. It also aims to demonstrate Japan's attitude of stepping up efforts for preventive maintenance concerning information ahead of concluding a general security of military information agreement (GSOMIA) as agreed on at the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee (2+2) meeting on May 1.

Such cases as the leak of information on the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) via the file-sharing software "Winny" and the leak of information on the Aegis radar system have occurred since the beginning of this year. Shocked by them, Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma unusually instructed his ministry in mid-May to conduct regular interviews.

The succession of leaks has made the US government distrustful of the Japanese government. Apparently affected by this, both the governments agreed to conclude the GSOMIA. The MOD intends to maintain information securely through regular interviews.

12) LDP suggests SDF guard diplomatic missions abroad as part of

efforts to strengthen diplomatic capability

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
May 22, 2007

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) special panel (headed by Yoshiro Mori) to discuss measures for strengthening Japan's diplomatic capability is drafting a final report, aiming to release it later this month. An outline of the report became known yesterday. The report proposes, for instance, opening the way for Self-Defense Forces (SDF) troops deployed abroad to guard Japanese embassies and increasing the number of embassies over the next 10 years, as well as the budget for official development assistance (ODA). The LDP intends to present the report to the government in June so that the proposals will be reflected in a budget bill for fiscal 2008.

Proposals shown in the report are sorted by category: (1) improving the diplomatic base; (2) stepping up diplomatic tools, and (3) teaming up with diplomatic players. The report stresses the need for Japanese diplomatic missions abroad, particularly those installed in highly dangerous countries, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, to be prepared for such threats as terrorism. The report points out the need for legislation for SDF troops deployed there, instead of foreign private security companies, to guard diplomatic establishments as well as protect officials working in diplomatic missions.

Many in the party, however, are cautious about allowing the SDF to

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guard diplomatic establishments abroad with someone arguing, "It may lead the SDF to use armed force as prohibited by Article 9 of the Constitution." In addition, this sort of SDF's overseas security mission may be opposed by recipient countries. This proposal has high hurdles to clear.

The report also proposes increasing the number of embassies from the current 120 to 150 and the number of the Foreign Ministry officials from the current 5,500 by 2,000 over the next 10 years. The report suggests setting numerical targets in terms of setting up new embassies and increasing the number of officials.

13) Expert panel's chair Yanai eager to reinterpret the right to collective defense

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
May 22, 2007

Former Ambassador to the United States Shunji Yanai, chair of the government's panel to discuss the question of whether to allow the exercise of the right to collective self-defense and other items, yesterday delivered a speech in Tokyo, in which he again indicated enthusiasm about reviewing the current interpretation of the Constitution, by saying: "Given that the security environment for Japan has changed greatly, I wonder whether our country can survive in the future if we stick to the 60-year-old interpretation of the Constitution."

On the question of amending the Constitution, Yanai emphasized: "In order to resolve an immediate problem, amending the Constitution is not a good choice because doing so takes much time." But he continued, "Even though the problem is resolved by reinterpretation, I think it is meaningful to have a provision to make things clear," indicating reinterpretation will not directly affect debate on constitutional revision. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has instructed the panel to discuss four cases regarding constitutional interpretations, including the case of intercepting ballistic missiles aiming at the US. In this regard, Yanai pointed out: "Some suggest we should discuss cases other than the four."

14) Yanai underlines need to exercise right to collective defense

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
May 22, 2007

Former Ambassador to the United States Shunji Yanai, who chairs Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's panel tasked with discussing the legal foundation for national security, delivered a speech at the Japan National Press Club yesterday. Yanai reiterated his view that the government should change its interpretation of the right to collective self-defense to allow the country to exercise it, saying: "Helping an ally leads to helping itself."

Fiscal System Council to urge government to correct increasing labor costs for Japanese workers at US bases

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
May 22, 2007

The number of Japanese workers at US bases in Japan has been increasing, while that of US troops in Japan has been decreasing, according to Finance Ministry statistics that were presented

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yesterday by the Fiscal System Council. By simple calculation, there are 75.9 Japanese workers per 100 US servicemen. The figure is far higher than that of South Korea, which is 47.2, and other countries hosting US bases. The Fiscal System Council adopted a position paper urging the government to rectify its host-nation support in which labor costs represent a large portion.

There were 45,939 US troops in Japan in fiscal 1978, but the number decreased by 27 percent to 33,453 (as of September 30) in FY 2006. Meanwhile, the number of Japanese workers at US bases increased by 20 percent from 21,017 in FY1978 to 25,403 in FY2006. The number has markedly grown since April 1991 when the Japanese government began shouldering the basic salaries of Japanese workers in accordance with a special agreement with the United States.

The number of local employees per 100 US servicemen is 47.2 in South Korea, 43.1 in Italy, and 30.8 in Germany. Except for Japan, their labor costs are being paid by the US military.

Cafeteria counter attendants numbering 715 represent the largest portion of the Japanese workers. They make an average of 3.34 million yen a year with the maximum being 5.39 million yen. The next largest group is security guards totaling 458 who make 5.75 million yen on the average, the maximum being 9.5 million yen.

The Finance Ministry intends to reflect its reduction policy in Japan-US talks in or after fiscal 2008 when the bilateral special agreement expires.

15) New US base in Okinawa: Coral reef damaged during survey;
Environmental group demands suspension

AKAHATA SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
May 22, 2007

The Naha Defense Facilities Administration Bureau (NDFAB) has forcibly conducted a preliminary survey for the construction of a new US military base. In this connection, it was found that a coral reef was damaged during the survey. Members of an environmental group yesterday lodged a protest, calling for suspension of the survey.

Takuma Higashionna, chief of the secretariat of the Dugong Protection Fund Committee, revealed the situation and lodged a strong protest during the prefectural citizens council's activities to make a request to the NDFAB in opposition to the relocation of base facilities. He called for immediate suspension of the survey. NDFAB chief Tsutomu Sato, who met with Higashionna, pledged to investigate the matter, noting, "We would like to determine what has happened."

According to Higashionna and Takenobu Tsuchida, chief of the secretariat of the Dugong Network Okinawa, the survey in question

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was carried out on the morning of May 20. Equipment to observe coral spawning was placed right above coral reefs about 2 km from Henoko

with reinforcing bars to fix the facilities pierced into the living coral reefs.

Higashionna said, "Coral lives near the location where the equipment was installed. You can observe spawning with the human eye. It is absolutely impermissible to destroy the natural environment spending tax money worth several billion yen for unnecessary research."

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16) Prevention of global warming: Introduction of numerical targets in final G-8 summit declaration now impossible; Japan, US negative toward idea

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
May 22, 2007

Berlin, Morihiko Koyama

Preliminary talks are now being held on the drafting of a final declaration on global warming to be released at the G-8 summit to be held in Heiligendamm, Germany. In this connection, it was found yesterday that it is now extremely difficult to include numerical targets, the idea the host nation Germany had called on other participating countries to agree.

The draft memorandum by one negotiator, which the Mainichi Shimbun has obtained, shows that numerical targets, which were included in the initial draft, and large portions of the perception of the present state of climate change have been either deleted or modified.

A showcase proposal by Germany aimed at having other participants take part in Europe's progressive approach has been deleted. The proposal included cooperation among participants to hold down global warming to an increase of 2 degrees Centigrade and the need to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in 10-15 years.

According to a German official in charge, European participants are generally in favor of the adoption of numerical targets. However, the US and Canada are strongly opposing the proposal. Russia and Japan are also negative toward the idea. German Chancellor Merkel remains positive, noting, "I will continue talks up to the last minute." However, the dominant view among government officials is that it will be impossible to reach an agreement.

17) Global warming: Forests fall short of absorbing CO2 due to insufficient tree maintenance effort; Households, companies likely to be urged to make more energy-conserving effort

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
Evening, May 21, 2007

(Commentary) Insufficient maintenance of forests has become a problem, because it determines whether Japan can achieve its target of cutting global warming gas emissions or not.

Japan has pledged to the world to achieve a 6 percent cut in CO2 emissions, compared with the 1990 level. However, its carbon emissions in 2005 saw an 8 percent increase, meaning that it must cut such emissions by 14.1 percent by the deadline.

Provided that Japan fails to achieve a 3.8 percent absorption of emissions by forests, companies and households would have to cover that portion.

The estimated amount of carbon emissions that forests can absorb per unit area is 10 times more than that of Russia and Canada, which have vast stretches of forests. Japan was allowed to cover the targeted reduction amount with absorption by forests because it strongly called for the inclusion of forest absorptions of CO2 in

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the calculations of its reduction achievements in return for

accepting a severe reduction target.

Forests absorb CO₂, a representative greenhouse gas. Further, if lumbers are used as fuel or as substitute for iron or aluminum, it is possible to curb the consumption of petroleum and coal.

The use of lumber from man-made forests planted during an expansive aforestation period has yet to become full scale. Now is a good opportunity to revive forests that have not received proper maintenance because the price competitiveness of domestic lumbers is becoming strong due to an increase in global demand for lumbers. Revitalizing the forest industry will become a driving force to promote tree thinning without depending on subsidies.

SCHIEFFER